RESTORATION REVIEW

Never give in! Never give in!
Never, never, never, never—
In nothing great or small, large or petty.
Never give in except to convictions of honour and good sense.

—WINSTON CHURCHILL

(See page 107)

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THE MILITANT INSTRUMENTALISTS

Before I make some comments about the new aggressiveness on the part of some of our brothers in the Christian Church, which should be of interest to you, I want to state once more my own position about the use of instruments in Christian worship.

I am unequivocally a non-instrumentalist, but I am not an anti-instrumentalist. The difference is very important. It is my opinion, and one that I hold firmly, that the corporate worship of the saints is more in keeping with the spirit of the New Covenant scriptures, which I consider a norm, if not a pattern, if it is kept free of such trappings as instrumental music. But I have a similar view about ornate architecture and large congregations.

But I am not an *anti-instrumentalist,* for I do not make this issue a matter of fellowship. I do not call my brothers who worship with the organ such things as *digressives* or *erring brothers.* I do not hesitate in the least to accept them as fully my brothers in Christ as my own "non-organic" brothers. I do not measure brotherhood in terms of agreement or disagreement on such matters.

Nor can I believe that the question of instrumental music is nearly as important to God as it seems to be to many of my brothers. I have no interest at all in debating it or of making any further extended study of it, not now at least, for I simply do not believe it is that important, either to the Lord or to a troubled world.

This should be a defensible position, for it is a subject that our Lord did not say one word about that we know of, and there is no information either way about instrumental music in the New Covenant scriptures. That is why my view can be nothing more than an *opinion.* I may think it a reasonable opinion, and one that can be defended, but it is still an opinion, and cannot be made a matter of faith.

It is my judgment therefore that there is but one way for Christian Churches and Churches of Christ to be of "one heart and one mind" on this matter, and that is for all of us to recognize that instrumental music is a matter of individual or congregational

conscience, and to have a "to each his own" attitude about it. We can all be one united church, with some congregations having the instrument and others not, just as we can have some supporting Herald of Truth and others not, and still be a united people.

It is utterly futile to suppose that we will ever see eye-to-eye on this question, as well as many other questions, and it is wrong for us to remain a separated people because of such differences. We can be one even when we go our own *organic* and *non-organic* ways, for we can recognize each other as brothers and treat each other as brothers. We can visit each other's services (with some perhaps choosing not to sing with the organ, which should be respected by the others) and use each other's ministers, and cooperate in missions to the lost and the deprived.

Imagine something like a music box keeping children of God separated. It is utterly ridiculous. And it is absurd for us to stand apart from each other until we agree on this matter, for we'll still be waiting when we are all dead and standing before God in judgment.

It would be a simple matter of course if I could persuade all the rest of you to accept my interpretation of what would be closer to the ancient order of things, for then we could auction off all the organs (and buy wheat for India with the money) and all of us would be of one mind on the matter. Some of you would then begin to learn how to sing! But I know that will not and cannot happen. Nor can I insist that this must be the case before there can be fellowship, for I have no right to make anything a test of fellowship that God has not made a condition for the salvation of the soul. So, I cannot point to the scriptures and say, "Now read this and give up your organ," for there is no clear injunction about the subject, some of the wild affirmations of some of my brothers notwithstanding.

I might point to the scriptures, and to history, and to our Restoration plea, and to the fact that other Christian communions have scruples against the instrument, and make a plea that our witness to divided Christendom not be marred by either our own internal fissions or by the presence of trappings that are offensive to numerous Christians. Such a plea I can indeed make, and do make, but that is all that I have the right to do. I cannot "disfellowship" those who disagree with me. And certainly my plea will be better heard if I say it to people that I *accept* as brothers in Christ than when I say it to those I am *rejecting* as false or digressive.

It might interest our readers to know that these efforts we are making toward unity and brotherhood, at least those of Carl Ketcherside and myself, started a decade ago when he and I debated the question of instrumental music with Seth Wilson and Don DeWelt of Ozark Bible College, brothers of the Independent Christian Church. Carl and I were in regular communication with each other in those days, just as we still are, but we said not one word to each other about what the other would say in that discussion. We wrote to each other before that debate that we accepted Don and Seth as much our brothers in

Christ as we did each other, and that our fellowship with them in the Lord was not dependent on our agreement on the instrument. It was in this spirit that the discussion was held, with Christian Church folk and people of the Church of Christ enjoying each other in the Lord.

I recall saying in that debate that I considered the organ an evil but not a sin, which is still my position. To be a sin it would have to violate the will of God, and we have no evidence that this is the case. But it is an evil in that it is allowed to divide Christians unnecessarily and to be a source of dispute among those who should love each other.

Well, that is my position on the organ, which, I realize, is very unorthodox for most Church of Christ leaders. I am persuaded, however, that the rank and file of our people agree with me more than with the orthodox position. Most people are peace-loving, and they do not like to reject each other over things that preachers fuss about. If it were not for the preachers keeping it alive, the organ question would have died long ago.

That brings me to what I want to say about our militant instrumentalist brothers, who are reviving the debate in its reversed order, for while it was once our folk that pressed the organ question, it is now the organ brethren that are pressing the issue. All this may turn out to be a blessing, for it may take this kind of development to make our folk realize how untenable their position is.

Some of the instrumentalists are challenging the Church of Christ powers that be for a defense of the position that the instrument is a sin and that it should be made a test of Christian fellowship. They are ready to defend the position that the scriptures allow the instrument, and they are calling the hand of the non-instrumentalists that has long been extended in defiant accusation, only to find that hand quietly withdrawn. It is indeed an interesting development in our history. I am not surprised that we have grown quieter about the instrument as we have grown more sophisticated, but I am surprised to see those awful “digressives” calling on us to pur up or shut up, only to find us unwilling to do either.

The article in this issue by brother Stults is a case in point. Read his article and observe the confidence with which he holds his position. Already he has had several debates on the music question with folk on my side, which he claims to have won, and is eager and ready for all comers. And he is a very able man, eminently Christian, and is positive that we are all wrong in our objections to the organ.

My file on material written in defense of the organ is now rather bulky. One brother, Robert E. Gulledge, has issued a mimeographed job on “What the Bible Teaches on Instrumental Music,” which he concludes by saying: “The non-instrument group (not all of them) makes the musical instrument issue a condition of fellowship. The truth of the matter is, we have more of a right to make a test of fellowship our of instrumental music than they, but we do not.” He finds the instrument in the Greek word *psallo.*

Another such document is by Bob Haddow, entitled “Instrumental Music Can Be Justified,” and he quotes eminent Greek scholars to substantiate his position that *psallo* allows the instrument. He gives a number of renditions of Eph. 5:19, one of which is the Amplified New Testament, which reads: “Offering praise with voices (and instruments), and making melody with all your heart to the Lord.” He concludes: “It seems to me very safe to conclude that singing with an instrument is doing nothing more than the Lord commanded—singing and making melody—and teaching the tune component of the song.” In this same paper brother Haddow is analyzing some of the arguments made by brother Roy Cogdill, an anti-instrumentalist.

On and on this could go. In one anti-instrumentalist journal Robert Gulledge is debating the issue with Irvin Himmel, and one must admit that brother Gulledge shows reasonable cause for his position in favor of the organ. If the organ is as sinful as we say it is, we should have little difficulty in convincing these good brothers of ours, who are as intelligent as we and who love the lord as much as we do.

The most interesting of all the developments is the challenge of a professor at a Christian Church college to one of the prominent professors at Abilene Christian College, calling upon him to defend his position on instrumental music as set forth in the *Firm Foundation*. The Christian Church brother was specific in his challenge, wanting the ACC brother to show cause for making the instrument a test of fellowship, and he was quite willing to rest his case on the Greek words involved. Both men are Greek professors. The ACC brother found himself too busy, and from the tone of his replies, which his correspondent made public, he had no interest in finding the time now or later.

All this sounds rather strange, doesn’t it? What are we to make of it? I have no reason to believe that the instrumentalists are going to be any more successful with their aggressiveness than we were in our antagonistic era, but something important may come of it. It looks as if this issue is going to have to be thrashed out before we can turn our efforts *(united* efforts, we hope) to more important matters. And I am convinced that the more the folk on our side lay their position open for investigation, and make an honest effort to evaluate all the evidence, the position that makes the use of an organ a sin will appear more and more untenable. I am saying that I do not think our orthodox position will stand up to the grueling of the abler instrumentalists, for it attempts to prove too much.

The militant instrumentalists are not, of course, after one with my position, and they recognize my right to my opinion and honor my liberty in Christ *not* to use it. They are justified in resenting the orthodox position that they are sinners and erring brothers because they use the organ, and it looks as if they are going to press their cause until this position is surrendered. This will be good.

It appears that my own position of non-instrumentalist, instead of anti-instrumentalist, is the only position that our side can defend. And it is the only position that can make unity possible between us.

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ALEXANDER CAMPBELL: A SPECKLED BIRD

"I became so speckled that no species would own me."

Mr. Campbell was quoting John Newton when he made that statement in the 1854 edition of *Millennial Harbinger,* p. 230, but he thought Newton's words applied to himself as well. The occasion was the prospect of a new version of the scriptures emanating from the labors of the American Bible Union, in which Mr. Campbell was to have a part. But among the Baptists there were some who were not cooperating in the effort, and there was objection to Mr. Campbell in particular. So he is defending himself against his detractors when he writes:

"I have stated my views and my faith on all great matters in the pulpits and in the audience of the old Rabbis, East and West; to the Williamses, McClays, and Parkinsons, of New York; to the Holcomes, and Staughtons, of Philadelphia; the Healey and Finleys, of Baltimore, and whenever they come in my path, from Georgia to Vermont, from the City of Washington to the Missouri River and the Indian Territories, to say nothing of all the Rabbis in the Valley of the Mississippi."

In making this defense of his orthodoxy, he explains why he has met with opposition from the clergy: "Our efforts for more than thirty years have been to take man out of the hand of the Priest. We have not labored in vain. Still, multitudes of our contemporary Protestants, Baptist and Pedobaptist are not yet emancipated from the manacles and the fetters of Protestant priests."

He thought a fresh version of the scriptures would liberate myriads more.

But those who opposed the new version did so on the ground that Mr. Campbell was not orthodox. So he goes on to say:

"My real genuine orthodoxy was never questioned on any of the vital principles of Christian faith, Christian piety, and Christian morality."

Yet he was *different.* He admits to being a speckled bird.

"Like John Newton, of Olney memory, whenever I saw a pretty feather in any bird, I pulled it out and placed it in my own plumage, until, as he said, . I became so speckled, that no species would own me'; till, like him, 'I began to think that I had become the prettiest bird among them.'"

There is important truth in these words, whether from Newton or from Campbell. To gather feathers from others we must of course be in their company. If we are preoccupied with admiring our own plumage, however dull it may appear to others, we are not likely to see beauty in any feather that is not of us. The willingness to be taught by those different from ourselves is a Christian virtue. One is wise who has eyes that can see beauty as well as ugliness in what others believe.

We should be willing to draw truths from any source whatever, and weave them into a position of our own, even at the risk of being a speckled bird. I tell my girls at the university that my philosophy is eclectic, that I am part idealist, part realist, part pragmatist, part existentialist, etc., for I find truths in all these. If I end up with a coat of many colors, like Joseph, then let it be a coat of many colors. If I be so speckled that no one claims me, I have at least preserved my own integrity, and I have been honest to God.

May God make us a flock of speckled birds, along with solid colors, stripes, and even polka dots. There is health in honest differences. I accept a man as my brother, not because his plumage is precisely the same as mine, but because he is in Christ. Since he is a son of God the Father, he is my brother beloved. As brothers we can pull feathers from each other's plumage, and thus become more interesting persons and more creative Christians. It isn't a pecking order that I'm calling for, but some feather pulling.—*the Editor*

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God and Culture . . .

THE WISDOM OF CHURCHILL

It is not difficult to believe that God used mightily the wit and wisdom of Winston Churchill. It was he that carried war-torn Britain to its finest hour, and surely this was on the side of right. Ouida and I have been reading together in the evening hours a little volume on the challenging words of Winston Churchill entitled *Never Give In*, with an introductory essay by Dwight Eisenhower.

It is good for the soul to thumb these pages and drink of the wisdom forged in the heat of adversity. Since his problems were of worldwide scope, it seemed almost impossible for him to be petty, and I agree with Plato that *pettiness* is the one trait that can never characterize the good man. Though he had more reasons to be proud than most of us, he was a humble man. Mr. Eisenhower comments that despite Churchill's important role in world affairs he was devoid of pompous stuffiness or of indifference to those about him.

The wisdom of Churchill provides satisfaction for those in search of spiritual values. He has a way seasoning spiritual truth with a touch of humor, leaving one with something to think about as well as a chuckle. My favorite was his remark on his 70th birthday that "I am ready to meet my Maker. Whether my Maker is ready for the great ordeal of meeting me is another matter."

And what a way he had with words! In this respect we can all sit at his feet, as indeed the whole world has. He is one of the richest sources for quotations since Shakespeare. It was he that gave us "the iron curtain" and that described Russia as "a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma." And the world will always remember his "blood, toil, tears, and sweat."

There is wisdom in his wit. Ouida liked his definition of a fanatic: "A fanatic is one who can't change his mind and won't change the subject," but I think this one is equally poignant: "What most people call bad judgment is judgment which is different from theirs at a particular moment." And this one deserves a place in our church bulletins: "Some people's idea of free speech is that they are free to say what they like, but if anyone says anything back, that is an outrage." And in this remark the church may have part of the answer as to why she loses so many of her sons in their youth: "My various readings led me to ask myself questions about religion. Hitherto I had dutifully accepted everything I had been told. I had always had to go to church once a week. All this was very good. I accumulated in those years so fine a surplus in the Bank of Observance that I have been drawing confidently upon it ever since."

We writers can profit from: "Short words are best and the old words when short are best of all."

Some of the stuff is pure fun. Ouida and I got a real charge out of the story of his dozing his way through a boring speech in the House of Commons. The speaker noticed him and asked loudly, "Mr. Churchill, *must* you fall asleep when I am speaking?" "No," he answered, "It is purely voluntary."

There is the story that when he was a young man he wore a moustache, and one time he was dating a girl of a different political persuasion. She said to him: "Mr. Churchill, I care for neither your politics nor your moustache." He answered: "Don't distress yourself. You are not likely to come in contact with either."

The thinking that led him through Britain's critical years is summed up in these words: "Never give in! Never give in! Never, never, never, never—in nothing great or small, large or petty. Never give in except to convictions of honour and good sense."

Churchill saw the world as fickle and irresponsible. He gave a lot of thought to the rules that man should live by. Ouida and I appreciated these weighty words, thinking how fine it is when parents and children alike can heed them: "The only guide to a man is his conscience; the only shield to his memory is the rectitude and sincerity of his actions. It is

very imprudent to walk through life without this shield, because we are so often mocked by the failure of our hopes; but with this shield, however the Fates may play, we march always in the ranks of honour."

To politicians: "It would be a great reform in politics if wisdom could be made to spread as easily and as rapidly as folly."

To youth: "Don't take 'No' for an answer. Never submit to failure. Do not be fobbed off with mere personal success or acceptance. You will make all kinds of mistakes; but as long as you are generous and true, and also fierce, you cannot hurt the world or even seriously distress her. She was made to be wooed and won by youth. She has lived and thrived only by repeated subjugations."

To parents: "There is no doubt that it is around the family and the home that all the greatest virtues, the most dominating virrues of human society, are created, strengthened, and maintained."

To a nation at war: "The problems of victory are more agreeable than those of defeat, but they are no less difficult."

To the legalist: "The human story does not always unfold like a mathematical calculation on the principle that two and two make four. Sometimes in life they make five or minus three; and sometimes the blackboard topples down in the middle of the sum and leaves the class in disorder and the pedagogue with a black eye."

Among his many spiritual insights this one is my favorite, for it teaches a profound truth too seldom recognized: "By a blessed dispensation, human beings forget physical pain much more quickly than they do their joyous emotions and experiences. A merciful Providence passes the sponge of oblivion across much that is suffered, and enables us to cherish the great moments of life and honour which come to us in the march."

Last of all, we pass along to you his conviction that governments as well as individuals must face judgment for their deeds.

"If a Government has no moral scruples it often seems to gain great advantages and liberties of action, but, 'all comes out even at the end of the day, and all will come out yet more even when all the days are ended:"

We do not know, of course, the measure of Churchill's faith in God, or whether he was a Christian. But we do know that he was a source of great strength to the free world during its most trying hour, and we should be thankful to God for that and for him.

"Rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of him who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, for he is God's servant for your good." (Rom. 13)—*the Editor*

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ON CIVIL DISORDERS

Ouida and I have been reading our copy of *Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders,* and we can't say that it is an enjoyable experience. It is tragic that our nation faces such peril that such a report is necessary, and yet that such a step could be taken by a troubled people is evidence that we yet have some sanity left. President Johnson appointed the Commission in July of 1967, following the riots that wracked a number of our major cities, asking that they study the causes and cures, and make recommendations to him. The Commission's report covers over 600 pages, and it should be read (at least a summary of it) by every person who is interested in the future of our nation.

My wife and I thought it noteworthy that the President chose the kind of people he did —eleven well-established and politically-moderate leaders from both politics and business. There were no Stokeley Carmichaels or Rap Browns, not even any Martin Luther Kings or James Baldwins selected. There were two Negroes, Senator Edward Brooke and Roy Wilkins of the NAACP, but these men represent interracial moderation, not radical militance. There was even a police chief from Georgia on the Commission!

Those close to the Commission's work report that the Georgia policeman surprised other members of the board with his acute sensitivity and compassionate approach to the problems.

It was hardly the type group from which we would expect any suggestions for sweeping changes or any recommendations that we break new social ground. And yet the results were such as we would have expected from radical militants or ultra-liberal intellectuals.

It is something like having a general in the White House during the threat of a war. The most hawkish often prove to be the most dovish!

It is to our nation's *credit* that an objective report like this can be made by its own people, its own leaders. Perhaps we can remain free so long as we search for all the facts as this report has done. *Ouida* was especially impressed that busy men like the mayor of New York and the president of the United Steel workers would give so much of their time to this study. At one time they went through 24 full days of executive sessions, from 9 a.m. till 10 p.m., working out what they should report to the President and the nation relative to their findings. Don't you think we should at least *read it?*

When I read of such sacrifices and such concern for our deeper social ills on the part of *outsiders,* the apathy of my own brethren in reference to suffering humanity troubled me even more. The concerns of this Report were the concerns of our Lord. We are most like Christ when we are giving ourselves to lifting up the fallen, and making men whole. Jesus gives the abundant life to men. When one reads this Report and sees for himself what is going on at his own doorstep, he realizes that the abundant life is far, far away for millions

of Americans in slums and ghettos. Jesus would be concerned, and we are hardly his church if we do not have a mission to such anguished souls.

The most ominous aspect of the Report is the conclusion that "Our nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white—separate and unequal" It makes ugly reading —the awful truth that our nation is indeed tragically divided. To us believers the truth is even more dreadful: *a divided church in a divided nation.* Part of the answer to the problem of a divided church may be for believers everywhere to join hands in the task of uniting mankind.

The Commission says the major need is to generate new will, such as the will to have less ourselves so that others may have more, to tax ourselves to the extent necessary to meet the vital needs of our nation. Again we emphasize the encouraging fact that this comes from a Commission that is politically and economically conservative and moderate.

There are of course specific recommendations, such as the creation of two million new jobs over the next three years. It calls for an end to *de facto* segregation through substantial federal aid, and dramatic improvement of schools serving disadvantaged children. It asks that the nation establish uniform welfare standards, at least as high as "the poverty level", with the federal government assuming at least 90 percent of total payments. Not least is the request for six million units of decent housing for low-income people.

The Commission found no one or two causes for the riots, but a cluster of causes: unemployment, lack of education, poverty, exploitation, insecurity, feelings of inferiority, disease, etc. But the essence of it all is wrapped up in this charge: "What white Americans have never fully understood—but what the Negro can never forget—is that white society is deeply implicated in the ghetto. White institutions created it, white institutions maintain it, and white society condones it."

The Report goes on to strip us of some of our delusions about the riots, some that we probably prefer to believe, such as the notion that they were a *conspiracy*, by the Communists or somebody. The riots were spontaneous and voluntary, growing out of the impossible conditions clearly outlined in the Report.

All of this should be a challenge to the faith of us all. Our Lord came to a world enslaved and impoverished by Rome. Ours is a nation suffering from the injustices of white supremacy, prejudice, and apathy. He brought wholeness to men, and in doing this he fed them as well as taught them. If we have his Spirit in us, we too must bring wholeness to the impoverished of our nation. This is why the gospel of Christ always has been and always will be a social gospel.—*the Editor*

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LETTER FROM THE CHURCH OF CHRIST SHELL:

Martin Luther King, Christianity, And The Law

By DAVID REAGAN

Dear Leroy:

I am writing in response to your thought provoking article, "Martin Luther *King,* Jr.: Symbol of Peace or Violence?"

I think you hit the nail on the head when you indicated in response to your own title that King was really a symbol of neither, but was instead a symbol of a people's struggle for dignity.

Still, for many he was synonymous with violence, and thus—as you noted from many his tragic assassination elicited only the thoughtless and cold response that "He got what was coming to him."

I think this response is a tragedy, and I'm convinced that it is rooted in a basic misunderstanding of King's methods. The misunderstanding stems in turn from our natural human tendency to oversimplify all issues and people, particularly those that are unpopular. Thus we flippantly deny any difference between communism and socialism, arguing that socialism is "creeping" or "crawling" communism or simply communism in disguise. Or we view communism and Catholicism as monolithic movements devoid of internal, national variances (Russian communism is as terrible and as threatening as Chinese communism or American Catholicism is as debased as the Spanish variety). Or we lump together such diverse groups as the hippies, the beatniks, the California motorcycle cults, the radical student political activists, and anyone else with long hair and give them simplistic collective labels like "Dropouts" or "Bums."

In like manner we have tended to view the black freedom movement in this country as a monolithic conspiracy and have steadfastly refused to recog*nize* the very fundamental differences which separate its leadership. Accordingly, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, an organization committed to progress through legal tests in the courts, is condemned with the same righteous indignation as the Black Panthers, a conspiratorial group committed to terroristic violence. The same logical tendency led many to lump Martin Luther King together with black militants like Stokeley Carmichael and Rap Brown"After all, they're all black, aren't they?"

This is not to say, of course, that King and Carmichael did not share many of the same goals—they did. But common goals do not necessarily produce cohorts. Men can also be separated by means. Senator Barry Goldwater and Lee Harvey Oswald both desired the removal of President Kennedy from power. Some of the bitterest of enemies can be found in the religious world where Christian leaders often denounce each other with vehemence, yet are committed to the same goal, namely the salvation of men's souls. Both the Republican and Democratic parties in this country seem to me to be dedicated to the same

goal—the creation of a society of maximized freedom in which every individual will have an equal opportunity to fulfill his potential—but they fight like tigers over the means to be used in attaining that goal. Similarly, Martin Luther King shared with many of the Black Power militants the goal of equal justice and opportunity for Negroes, but King was profoundly separated from the Browns and Carmichaels over the question of means.

King was a revolutionary. But the crucial point that made all the difference in the world is that King was a *Christian* revolutionary. He was a Christian revolutionary in the sense that his motives and methods were rooted in Christian ethics.

I know that there are some of our brethren who would be repulsed at this idea, who believe that the words "Christian" and "revolution" are incompatible, and who would run immediately to their New Testaments to quote the Apostles' emphasis on the Christian's duty to obey the law (Romans 13:18 and I Peter 2:13 and 14). But I feel that they fail to realize that the principle of Christian obedience to legal authority has its exceptions.

Jesus Himself stated one of these exceptions in no uncertain terms when He exhorted His followers to "render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's." (Matthew 22:21) All would surely agree therefore that a Christian would be bound to violate a state law requiring the worship of the chief of state or a law prohibiting worship entirely. It was such an attitude that brought the Apostle Paul into almost constant conflict with the law during his ministry and which resulted in his spending many a long night in prison. It is interesting to note too that violence seemed to follow Paul everywhere he went, despite the fact that he did nothing except preach a message of love. Because of this, I'm quite convinced that the good, law-abiding citizens of the Roman Empire must have viewed Paul as a militant advocate of violence and probably sighed with relief over the news of his death, muttering to themselves something like "He got what was coming to him."

Now don't misunderstand me. I'm not attempting to deify Martin Luther King or even to sanctify him by comparing him to Paul. I'm simply pointing to some important parallels which characterized the activities which they both performed in the name of Christianity.

But to return to the point, the admonition of Jesus in Matthew 22 is not the only exception to the New Testament principle of respect for legal authority. Equally important is the principle of Christian ethics (see Romans 14) which teaches that it is a sin to violate one's conscience regardless of the innocence of the particular act. To illustrate, playing card games like Old Maid or Canasta may be as innocent a past time as one could find, but to the person who is convinced that all card games are evil, participation is ruled out, and rightly so, for to participate would require the violation of conscience, and that would be a sin. By the same token, I would not object to a school board requiring my children to begin each school day by saluting the flag and repeating the Pledge of Allegiance—unless I felt that such an action constituted idolatry or blasphemy, in which case I would strenuously

object and would even instruct my children to refrain from obeying the rule. To do otherwise would constitute a violation of my conscience and would put me in the intolerable Christian position of condoning a sin. This, of course, is precisely the position that the Seventh Day Adventists have taken on this issue, and the Supreme Court of the United States has upheld their refusal to obey the law.

The crucial point that we cannot escape is that Christian ethics erects the individual conscience as a barrier to an indiscriminate obedience to all laws. So does the whole heritage of Western thought, for even the Greek root of Western civilization, with its emphasis upon reason rather than faith, advocated through the Stoics the concept of a higher law of nature which is binding upon every intellect.

This is precisely what the Nuremberg War Crimes Trials were all about. The Nazi criminals who stood before that bar of justice argued their innocence on the grounds that their heinous crimes were performed in obedience to state law—in other words, they were simply "following orders." Our resounding response was a refusal even to consider the argument. We rejected it because we counter argued that man's conscience is ultimately responsible to a higher law, and that when the state orders a man to commit an act that is in violation of that higher law, he has an obligation to *disobey* that order. In short, we hanged men at Nuremberg because they loyally obeyed all the laws of their state.

To summarize, there are at least two situations in which a Christian may justifiably refuse to obey the law: 1) where obedience would constitute a violation of his obligations to God, and 2) where obedience would constitute a violation of his conscience.

A third situation emerges from a unique aspect of the American legal system. The United States Constitution specifies that any legal suit brought before the Supreme Court must constitute "a real case or controversy" (Article III, Sec. 2). In practice this has meant that the Supreme Court will not accept theoretical or hypothetical cases. In other words, to test the constitutionality of the law it is usually necessary to violate the law. For example, when Congress passed the Civil Rights Act of 1965 requiring restaurants to serve all customers regardless of race, many law-abiding, white Americans felt that the law was unconstitutional. Yet, to test the constitutionality of this law presented a cruel dilemma to these Americans, for the only way to get the law before the Court was to violate it. This is exactly what several did, and one of these law breakers, Lester Maddox (who was *not* sustained by the Supreme Court) was almost immediately rewarded for his violation of the law by being elected the Governor of Georgia. The *point* of this story is that our constitutional system contains a curious paradox: it is based upon respect for the rule of law, yet it requires that one violate that law in order to test its compatibility with our basic constitutional principles. The *moral* of the story is that law breaking is often sanctioned by society when the law breaker is acting according to the wishes of the majority.

The third situation in which a Christian may justifiably violate the law may thus be characterized as one which is peculiarly American. In summary, it is the situation where an American citizen decides to exercise his right to violate the law for the purpose of testing its constitutionality. In this case, obedience to the law might not violate either his obligations to God or his conscience. He may simply feel that the law is unfair or unjust.

This does not mean, however, that a Christian can resort to any method in his violation of the law. Just as his motive for violating the law must be proper, so also must his means be compatible with Christian principles. This, of course, raises the whole controversial question of pacifism. Although I personally believe that a Christian may resort to violence in certain exceptional circumstances (personal or national self defense), I think we can avoid this entire issue, for Martin Luther King—the focal point of our concern—never advocated violence. Instead, he taught the strategy of nonviolent resistance, a strategy that should be acceptable to every Christian who recognizes the right of civil disobedience in certain situations.

However, the concept of acceptable nonviolent resistance must be defined carefully lest it be used as a subterfuge for clandestine violations of the law that are motivated by a sense of selfishness. Martin Luther King clearly recognized this problem and attempted to deal with it in his famous "Letter from the Birmingham Jail" This letter was written in 1963 after his arrest for civil rights activities in Birmingham, Alabama. It was written in response to criticisms directed against him and his movement by eight Alabama clergymen who had publicly condemned his demonstrations and had called for a return to "the principles of law and order and common sense:' "When rights are consistently denied," the clergymen argued, "a cause should be pressed in the courts and in negotiations among local leaders, and not in the streets." It was a call to return to the strategy of hopeful patience.

Martin Luther King responded patiently, attempting to show that his resort to civil disobedience in Birmingham had been a *last* resort after all negotiations had become hopelessly deadlocked. Then, in moving words charged with emotion, he addressed himself to the broader question of patience by the Negro people:

> We have waited for more than 340 years for our constitutional and God-given rights. The nations of Asia and Africa are moving with jet-like speed toward the goal of political independence, and we still creep at horse and buggy pace toward the gaining of a cup of coffee at a lunch counter.
>
> I guess it is easy for those who have never felt the stinging darts of segregation to say wait. But when you have seen vicious mobs lynch your mothers and fathers at will and drown your sisters and brothers at whim; when you have seen hate-filled policemen curse, kick, brutalize, and even kill your black brothers and sisters with impunity; when you see the vast majority of

> your 20 million Negro brothers smothering in an airtight cage of poverty in the midst of an affluent society; when you suddenly find your tongue twisted and your speech stammering as you seek to explain to your six-year old daughter why she can't go to the public amusement park that has just been advertised on television, and see tears welling up in her little eyes when she is told that Funtown is closed to colored children, and see the depressing clouds of inferiority begin to form in her little mental sky, and see her begin to distort her little personality by unconsciously developing bitterness toward white people; . . . when you are humiliated day in and day out by nagging signs reading "white" men and "colored"; when your first name becomes "nigger" and your middle name becomes "boy" (however old you are) and your last name becomes "John", and when your wife and mother are never given the respected title "Mrs."; . . . when you are forever fighting a degenerating sense of "nobodiness"then you will understand why we find it difficult to wait. There comes a time when the cup of endurance runs over, and men are no longer willing to be plunged into an abyss of injustice where they experience the bleakness of corroding despair.

With this eloquent backdrop, King proceeded to define in detail his concept of civil disobedience. He emphasized that for civil disobedience to be acceptable to the Christian, it must be performed *openly, lovingly, nonviolently,* and *with a willingness to accept the penalty.*

What a contrast this approach offers to that of the Black Power militants! Motivated by *hatred,* their disobedience of the law is *covert* and *violent,* with *no* willingness whatsoever to pay the consequences. Their attitude toward the law is essentially the same as the white supremist who masquerades at night under a white sheet spreading terror through Negro communities. King had utter contempt for such an attitude and approach. "In no sense," he wrote, "do I advocate evading or defying the law as the rabid segregationist would do. This would lead to anarchy."

Still, the problem remains that a nonviolent, Christian act of civil disobedience may lead to violence as it did in Selma, Alabama, when police and state troopers attacked the civil rights marchers. This is a difficult and cruel dilemma for the Christian protestor who abhors violence, but it is an issue that King met head-on in his Birmingham Letter:

> In your statement you asserted that our actions, even though peaceful, must be condemned because they precipitate violence. But can this assertion be logically made? Isn't this like condemning the robbed man because his possession of money precipitated the evil act of robbery? Isn't this like condemning Socrates because his unswerving commitment to truth and his philosophical delvings precipitated the misguided popular mind to make him

drink the hemlock? Isn't this like condemning Jesus because His unique God consciousness and never-ceasing devotion to His will precipitated the evil act of crucifixion?

Needless to say, these are not the words of an apostle of hatred and violence. They are instead the words of a committed Christian whose conscience has been pricked by injustice but whose heart is overflowing with love.

This is the man who "got what was coming to him."

This is the man our brotherhood colleges could not bring themselves to honor with memorial services.

This is the man whose tragic death was so adroitly ignored by our ministers in their usual sermons on "the plan of salvation."

And this is the man that we who sneered may someday respect as we stand in the ashes of our cities and homes and long for a Negro leader of compassion and dignity.

Yours in Christ,

DAVID

———————

—David Reagan is professor of government at Austin College, Sherman, Texas.

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HOW ABOUT INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC?

By Claude Stults

STUDENT: Professor, I heard a preacher say that we are commanded to "sing and make melody with the heart"; and that that commandment prohibits the use of a musical instrument, just like the commandment to build the ark of acacia wood, prohibited building it of oak, or hickory.

PROFESSOR: Yes; I, too, have heard that, many times. But there is no such prohibition in either the word "singing—adontes", or "making melody—psallontes". The Greek word "psallo" is often translated "play", in the Old Testament; and should be translated that way, at least once, in the New Testament, Romans 15:9, by reason of being a quotation of Old Testament prophecy, where it means "play". But, let's look at this word "ado". It occurs five times in the New Testament, and primarily and properly means, "sing"; but its meaning does not exclude the playing of an instrument as accompaniment to the voice. It occurs three times in the Book of Revelation, at 5:8, 9; 14:2, 3; and 15:2, 3; in every instance of which, musical instruments are mentioned, as accompaniment to the singing. In

Colossians 3:16, an instrument is not mentioned; but in Ephesians 5:19, while an instrument is not specifically stipulated, the word ‘’psallo’‘ is used, which does mean to “play a musical instrument.” So I must conclude that if “psallontes en te kardia umon” does not specifically stipulate the playing of a musical instrument, neither it, nor “adontes” preclude it.

STUDENT: This dialogue seems to leave everything up in the air; leaves it entirely a matter of opinion, as if God is worshipped the way that we think right and proper, or the way we want to worship; just as though God has no notion of what constitutes acceptable worship. I think that God had something definite in mind, when He commanded to “psallo”, and that “psallo” meant a specific action. I seriously doubt that it can be performed by anyone, or all, of a dozen different activities. But, Professor, you have said that its meaning is a matter of opinion; doesn’t that place our opinion above God’s will, in the worship of God?

PROFESSOR: Oh, I quite agree with you, that things are left rather up in the air, by our subservience to our human opinions; and I quite agree with you, that God had something definite in mind, when His Holy Spirit used the word “psallo”, or “psallontes”. But because of the multifarious ways in which the word has been translated in the Bible, and defined in the dictionaries, we are faced with a dilemma of blindly accepting the Translators’ rendering, or choosing among the lexicographers’ definitions. Thus, its usage in any particular passage becomes a matter of choice and opinion. In virtually every instance, the initial rendering of the word was entirely a matter of the Translators’ opinion, selecting one, from, at least, five different definitions for one and the same word. And, at this late age, whether we think that they made the proper translation, or not, is entirely a matter of our opinion. The value of that opinion depends largely upon the validity of the evidence upon which it is based. There is one thing that you should remember: God did not say, “sing”, or “sing a psalm”, or “sing praise”, or “play”, or even “make melody”; He said “psallontes”. The Translators “decided” what they thought He meant. In doing so, they formed and expressed an opinion . . . their opinion.

I have my opinion, and I sincerely believe it, based upon what I believe to be valid evidence. I believe that when God said “psallo”, He meant “play” a musical instrument, and authorizes the use of instrumental accompaniment to singing, in Christian worship. But I must recognize that other men have differing opinions; and also must recognize that there is a possibility (however small, I think it is) that their opinion is the correct one, both being opinions. Nevertheless, I am fully persuaded that I have a responsibility, before God, to worship Him, in the way that I believe that He said to do it. I also believe that every other man has a like responsibility to worship God in exactly the way that he believes that God has specified that He must be worshipped. At the same time, I believe that each of us must respect the sincerity of the other’s opinion, and not anathematize him, for honestly

differing from us. I also believe that neither of us has any right before God, to make our opinion a condition or test of fellowship in worship and service to our God, in view of the fact that it is God alone who knows for a certainty.

STUDENT: Professor, the people whom I know, who oppose the use of musical instruments, say that it is not a matter of opinion, but of faith—believing and doing exactly what God commanded.

PROFESSOR: That, too, is just their opinion. They say that, because they do not realize what an opinion is, or what constitutes an opinion. Whenever there is an explicit, specific and unequivocal word of God, concerning any matter, then it is a matter of the faith revealed from God. But when a word has several, or many, meanings, we are faced with the necessity of ascertaining just which meaning God had in mind. Quite often, perhaps usually, or almost always, this can be achieved by comparing that word's usage in every place where it occurs; but there may be times when that usage, itself, is not clear. Whenever it is possible to translate a word in as few as two ways, and both ways seem adequate and reasonable, it becomes necessary to choose between the two. That choice is inevitably the translator's opinion. Then, whenever the reader must consider whether the translator was correct in his choice, or not, what he thinks about it is inevitably an opinion . . . his own opinion . . . based upon an opinion. That is the situation that is involved in "psallo", except that there are at least six translations of the word found in the Bible, and as many definitions of it found in the dictionaries. Either we must blindly accept and follow what the Translators have opinionated, or set out on a "witch-hunt" for another opinion—our own opinion.

STUDENT; For the sake of harmony in doctrine, or faith; for the sake of fellowship and brotherhood; why can't sincere Christians come together in honest and friendly discussion and study, and agree to the determining of what is the primary and essential meaning of this divisive word; and agree to accept that as the solution to division?

PROFESSOR: One would think that that might be possible, and that it might be the solution to our problem; but so far, it has not worked out, that way. For nearly forty years, I have been trying to get my brethren, whose opinion differs from mine, to do just that. I have engaged in seven public debates with them, and have participated in many more discussions by correspondence, all with a desire to that end; that we might consider each other brethren, and have fellowship together. But not in one single instance has there been any success, whatsoever. Even after my best and most conciliatory effort, they forbade me to call them "brother", and refused to acknowledge me a brother, even an 'erring brother"

STUDENT; Whose fault was that? Didn't you have a "case"; or didn't you present it; or were they just blind to it, and obdurate?

PROFESSOR: Let's not ascribe any blame or fault; I don't want to take the blame, and I am sure that they feel no guilt of wrongdoing. The difficulty has been, and always will be, that we each brought into the meeting, or discussion, our own private opinion of what the primary meaning of "psallo" is. It was my opinion that the primary and essential meaning, the inherent meaning, of the word is that given as such, in virtually all Greek-English dictionaries and lexicons, which is "play". It was their opinion that the word had alienated, or changed its primary and essential meaning, and now means "sing". As a consequence, each found the other like "the village schoolmaster" in Goldsmith's "The Deserted Village". "Even the parson must admit his skill, for when he's beaten, he'll argue still." You surely know the old adage, "Convince a man against his will; he's of the same opinion still" No; no; I see no more prospect of getting all of us to agree, concerning the primary and essential meaning of "psallo", than we are already agreed. Even if we did come to agreement, would not the process by which we came to it, almost inevitably, be one of ratiocination, or reasoning, where God has not explicitly and unequivocally declared what the primary meaning is; and would not our conclusion be an opinion, even if we all agreed to it, and held the same opinion? If we all agreed that "psallo" means *"sing"*, would not that agreement be an opinion, under the circumstances of the numerous definitions in the dictionaries? Would not our agreement be an agreement of opinion, if not of accommodation?

STUDENT: That is a pretty dismal picture. Is there no hope for unity and brotherhood among several million people, who have prattled so much about Jesus' prayer that His followers might be one? Is there no means of agreement and fellowship?

PROFESSOR: It does seem quite dismal, but perhaps is not so dismal as it seems. I am so anxious for some kind of agreement and fellowship, and brotherhood, among warring brethren, that I am willing to let the wish be "father to the thought", and dare to hope that we might all come to agree, that the actual meaning of "psallo" has been manufactured and distorted into a matter of opinion; and that whatever meaning we may assign to it, is strictly a matter of our opinion. I allow myself to hope that, out of that agreement, there can, and will, emerge a tolerance for the differing opinion of another, and a willingness toward fellowship and brotherhood. I allow myself to hope that there will spring up, among the "saints", an independence of reading and thought, that will recognize opinions, as opinions.

When I was a boy preacher, I had a very dear friend in an elderly preacher, the State Secretary of West Virginia, John Ray Clarke. He used to say, "We could have Christian Unity in one generation, if we would just kill-off all the preachers, and let the people read the Bible for themselves." That would be sort of rough on the preachers, but it might be worth a try.*—Baldwyn, Miss.*

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RESPONSE TO MEYERS' SERMON ON KING

In the last issue of this journal we promised to run some of the reactions to the sermon "Can We Understand?" by Robert Meyers. We are doing this because we believe a revival of social concern is imperative to the mission of the body of Christ in our time. If we can believe in a "social gospel" to the extent that we can get stirred up when a Roman Catholic is a candidate for President, as we did in 1960, then it seems consistent to be concerned over more vital social issues facing our nation in these critical times.

The sermon by Prof. Meyers has been issued in reprint form. The first supply was soon exhausted, but more have been printed and are available for 12 for 1.00 or 100 for 5.00, which is below what they cost us. A single copy will be sent free upon request.

There was considerable reaction to this sermon arising out of the tragic murder of Martin Luther King, both *pro* and *con.* Here is a sampling:

> Just read Bob Meyers article: It is soul stirring. Saw in *Firm Foundation* that Uncle *Tom* Keeble passed away. I wonder what churches of Christ are going to do now for a "pet nigger?" (to quote "How to Become a Bishop without Being Religious") Well, I think he was used . . . in the wrong way.—*reader in Lincoln, Nebraska*
>
> I have in the past thought very highly of you and praised your stand on issues such as unity, mutual ministry, and the pastor system. But for printing and praising the article about Martin Luther King I praise you not. If he was not an outright Communist, he was a puppet in their hands. But rather than try and tell you in my words about him, I am sending a pamphlet that will refer you to documented proof of his shady actions.—*Ted Leake, Baton Rouge, La.*
>
> Thanks for printing this and for making reprints available.—*Neal Buffaloe, Arkansas*
>
> We felt, when we first read Robert Meyers' advice and solutions, that here is something that we can do. So I am enclosing a check for 5.00 for 100 copies.—*Mr. and Mrs. T. H. Bumstead, California*
>
> The current issue of April with Bob Meyers' sermon and Norman Parks' reply to Bales is worth the price of the annual subscription.—*a professor in Lubbock, Tex.*
>
> After reading and rereading your April issue may I say that your popularity with me has hit bottom. I don't think Martin Luther King, Jr. was a great man. . . The Parks whipping of Bales says to me that he is of the something for nothing group as was M. L. K.. Jr. . . . Don't you have any pride in being of the land of the free and the home of the brave?—*a reader in Oregon*

It was an inflammatory sermon. I have been a resident of Los Angeles for the past 36 years and have heard many good sermons preached by both black and white ministers. In Los Angeles more than most any place you can name, the Negroes are helped, appeased, and catered to more than any race of people you can name. The more that has been done, the more is demanded. Our property and other tax has soared to the breaking point to meet welfare needs. Jobs *are* available, but they are very choosy about jobs as the relief check is good and that way they have more time for demonstrations. 5,000 homes per month are being taken for property tax alone. Old people with meager incomes and bare existence are losing their homes for taxes . . . I am afraid a sermon such as Mr. Meyers' might tend to make them feel justified for the chaos and destruction they are responsible for. I suggest you have him read the *Readers Digest* (April issue), written *before* King's death, and see what his plans were for the "Poor People's March" on Washington.—*Mrs. H. J. B., Los Angeles*

Brother Meyers' perceptive and timely sermon concerning Martin Luther King was worth the price of a whole subscription—*Lester LeMay, Kentucky*

Please send us 12 copies of "Can We Understand?" so that we may pass it on to our neighbors and friends. It is worthwhile and meaningful.—*Mrs. Jerry Higginbotham, Missouri*

⁂ ⁂ ⁂

The next issue will be the September number. We skip July and August. Our ten issues of 20 pages each provide a book of 200 pages.

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